

Message Text

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ORIGIN PM-09

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 062455

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TSPA, MILI, UN, AS

SUBJECT: OUTER SPACE: REGISTRATION OF SPACE OBJECTS

REF: STATE 50024

STATE 52029

1. AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY (FIRST SECRETARY MCKEOWN) ON INSTRUCTIONS CAME INTO DEPARTMENT (PM) APRIL 3 TO PASS ALONG CANBERRA' S ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT STATUS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF UN LEGAL SUBCOMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF SPACE REGISTRATION ISSUE; EXPRESS GOA UNDERSTANDING OF AND GENERAL SUPPORT FOR US APPROACH AS EMBODIED IN DRAFT TREATY; AND SEEK US REACTION TO THREE SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS TO US TEXT. DEPTOFF EMPHASIZED ONCE AGAIN THAT US DRAFT REPRESENTED MAXIMUM CONVENTION US COULD ACCEPT, BUT INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO EXAMINE ADDITIONS PROPOSED BY GOA.

2. AUSTRALIAN EMBOFF REPORTED CANBERRA SEES THREE MAJOR
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AREAS OF DIFFICULTY LOOMING AHEAD IN SPACE REGISTRATION
TREATY DISCUSSIONS: (A) OVER AMOUNT AND KIND OF DATA TO

BE REPORTED TO SYG ON EACH LAUNCH; (B) MARKING; AND (C) REQUIREMENT TO REGISTER PARTS OF SPACE CRAFT (BOTH INTACT COMPONENTS AND BROKEN UP DEBRIS).

3. RE REQUIRED DATA: (A) CANBERRA BELIEVES THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF UPDATING REQUIREMENT TO INSURE THAT UN REGIS-

TER REFLECTS CURRENT SPACE REALITY RATHER THAN HISTORICAL FACT. GOA SUGGESTS THAT SUCH PERIODIC UPDATING OF INFORMATION REPORTED IS NECESSARY BOTH TO INSURE MAXIMUM UTILITY OF SPACE REGISTER FOR LIABILITY PURPOSES AND TO PROVIDE ACCURATE CENSUS OF SPACE OBJECT LOCATIONS WHICH GOA SUGGESTS IS NEEDED TO PERMIT SENSIBLE PLANNING FOR POSITIONING OF SUBSEQUENT SATELLITES. GOA RECOGNIZES SECTION 6(2) OF CANADIAN- FRENCH DRAFT MIGHT IMPOSE ONEROUS BURDEN, BUT HOPES US CAN FIND SOME ACCEPTABLE UPDATING FORMULA. GOA PROPOSES FOLLOWING LANGUAGE TO BE ADDED TO INTRODUCTORY PARA OF ART 4(1): QUOTE AND SHOULD AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE ADVISE THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF ANY CHANGES IN THIS INFORMATION WHILE EACH OBJECT REMAINS IN ORBIT END QUOTE.

(B) WHILE RECOGNIZING TECHNICAL AND SECURITY PROBLEMS INVOLVED, GOA NONETHELESS BELIEVES LAUNCHING STATES SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO SUPPLY SOME INDICATION OF IMPACT AREA. IT THEREFORE PROPOSES THAT FOLLOWING LANGUAGE BE ADDED AT END OF ART 4(2): QUOTE AND OF THE AREA WITHIN WHICH THE SPACE OBJECT HAS LANDED END QUOTE.

4. DEPTOFF IN RESPONSE OBSERVED WHOLE SUBJECT WAS SO COMPLEX TECHNICALLY THAT ALL FORMULATIONS OF TREATY LANGUAGE HAD TO BE VERY CAREFULLY SCRUTINIZED BY TECHNICAL STAFF AS WELL AS BY LAWYERS AND POLICY OFFICERS. AS PRELIMINARY REACTION, GOA UPDATING FORMULA MIGHT BE ACCEPTABLE SINCE IN CRUNCH LAUNCHING STATE COULD DETERMINE IT WAS NOT " PRACTICABLE" TO SUPPLY ANY INFORMATION. RE IMPACT AREA, DEPTOFF POINTED TO SERIOUS TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN ATTEMPTING TO PREDICT TIME OR PLACE OF REENTRY AND TO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF TRYING TO LOCATE AFTER FACT IMPACT POINT OF SMALL METAL OBJECT IN VAST
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AREA OF EARTH' S SURFACE. HE AGREED TO EXPLORE FEASIBILITY OF IDENTIFYING SOME MEANS, SUCH AS DELINEATION OF GROUND TRACE, OF NARROWING DOWN SIZE OF POSSIBLE IMPACT AREA.

5. GOA MADE FOLLOWING SUGGESTION ON MARKING: QUOTE INCLUDE A PROVISION TO THE EFFECT THAT ALL SPACE OBJECTS CAPABLE OF WITHSTANDING ENTRY SHOULD BE MARKED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THERE IS A REASONABLE PROBABILITY THAT THE STATE OF ORIGIN OF SPACE OBJECTS WHICH HAVE RETURNED TO EARTH

CAN BE IDENTIFIED BY SUCH A MARKING. END QUOTE

6. IN RESPONSE, DEPTOFF REVIEWED ENGINEERING AND COST ARGUMENTS AGAINST MANDATORY INTERNATIONAL MARKING SYSTEM. HE ALSO EMPHASIZED SEPARATE MARKING SCHEME WAS UNNECESSARY, RECALLING THAT ABSENCE OF ELABORATE INTERNATIONAL MARKING SYSTEM HAD NOT PREVENTED NEW ZEALAND SCIENTISTS FROM

IDENTIFYING ORIGIN OF ASHBURTON BALLS, THUS DEMONSTRATING CONCLUSIVELY THAT COMPETENT TECHNICIANS FROM NON- SPACE STATE UTILIZING ONLY READILY AVAILABLE, PUBLISHED INFORMATION COULD SOLVE IDENTIFICATION PROBLEM. DURING ENSUING DISCUSSION, EMBOFF WONDERED ALOUD WHETHER SOME WAY MIGHT BE FOUND TO UTILIZE EXISTING MANUFACTURERS' FABRICATION AND CONTROL NUMBERS. DEPTOFF THEN POINTED TO INCONGRUITY OF LAWYERS IN LSC INSISTING THAT SOME MARKING MECHANISM WAS NECESSARY AND FEASIBLE IN FACE CONTRARY CONCLUSION REACHED BY TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED MEMBERS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SUBCOMMITTEE. DEPOFF SUGGESTED GOA MIGHT EXPLORE PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION TO DETERMINE FEASIBILITY OF HAVING LSC REQUEST S& T COMMITTEE TO REVIEW MARKING QUESTION EVERY TWO OR THREE YEARS AND, IF STATE OF ART ADVANCED SUFFICIENTLY TO MAKE WORKABLE SOLUTION POSSIBLE, TO RECOMMEND SUCH SOLUTION FOR ADOPTION BY LSC AND EVENTUAL ADDITION TO PROJECTED REGISTRATION CONVENTION. EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT THAT TACK APPEARED TO BE WORTH EXPLORING.

7. LOOKING BACK OVER THREE SUGGESTIONS, EMBOFF THEN INDICATED GOA BELIEVED THAT PERCEIVABLE MOVEMENT ON ANY TWO OF IDENTIFIED PROBLEM AREAS WAS NECESSARY TO DISTRACT REPS FROM OTHER AREAS WHICH ARE REALLY TOUCHY. HE DECLARED GOA HOPES THAT US AFTER SITTING THROUGH DEBATE WOULD BE ABLE TO INDICATE IT HAD LISTENED TO CONCERNS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHERS AND WAS MOVING TO MEET THEM BY AGREEING TO THESE MODEST ADDITIONS.

8. IN FINAL MINUTES, DEPTOFF REITERATED US WILLINGNESS TO LOOK AT LANGUAGE SUGGESTED BY GOA, BUT UNDERScored FACT US HAD EXTENDED ITSELF TO MAXIMUM ON DRAFT TREATY AND THAT MARGIN FOR ANY ADDITIONS WAS EXTREMELY SLIM. DEPTOFF THEN REITERATED POINT MADE IN INITIAL PRESENTATION TO GOA EMBASSY: THAT US WAS UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT REGISTRATION TREATY AND HAD NO INTENTION OF ACCEPTING UNDESIRABLE PROVISIONS JUST TO GET CONVENTION. HE ASKED EMBOFF TO MAKE CLEAR TO GOA THAT IF CHOICE BEFORE USG WAS APPEARING AS THE " HEAVY" IN LSC AND TAKING INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL HEAT ON ONE HAND AND JEOPARDIZING SECURITY OF SOME OF OUR SPACE ACTIVITIES ON OTHER, THERE WAS IN FACT NO CHOICE. US WOULD CHEERFULLY ACCEPT ROLE OF OGRE. GOA EMBOFF

REPLIED HE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THIS US PROPOSITION. HE THEN
ADDED THAT GOA HOPED IT COULD HELP US TO AVOID BEING PUT
INTO UNHAPPY ROLE OF VILLAIN. ROGERS

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